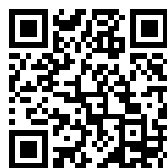

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FAITH, HOPE, AND CHARITY.

THE SUBSTANCE

OF

A SERMON

PREACHED AT

THE DEDICATION OF

THE CATHOLIC CHAPEL

AT BRADFORD,

IN THE

COUNTY OF YORK,

ON WEDNESDAY, JULY 27, 1825.



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LONDON:

PRINTED BY WILLIAM EUSEBUIS ANDREWS,

3, CHAPTERHOUSE-COURT, ST. PAUL'S.

1825.

A SERMON.

We see now, through a glass in a dark manner; but then, face to face. Now I know in part; but then I shall know, even as I am known. And now there remain faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.—1 Cor. xiii. 12, 13.

IN these words, my christian brethren, the apostle speaks of the natural blindness of man respecting religion. He teaches, that whilst we live in this lower world, encompassed with clouds and darkness, we see faintly and obscurely the things that are above; that the revelations made to us respecting a future world, are often wholly above our comprehension, and generally full of mystery and difficulty; that we shall never be able fully to comprehend them, 'till the veils drawn aside by death, and we behold God face to face; in whom, as in a clear mirror, all truth and all knowledge will be found.

In the mean time, there remain for our exercise three virtues, faith, hope, and charity, which united, form an epitome of the whole duty of a Christian, each of which is commanded and necessary; but the first, the greatest, the most excellent and the most indispensable of which is charity.

Faith serves as a remedy for our natural defects, and supplies the place of knowledge. It teaches us to believe, without doubting, doctrines which we cannot comprehend, on the testimony of God, who has taught them. It teaches us to put a restraint on the daring flights of reason, and to confine within its proper limits this noblest of our natural gifts; to employ it in examining the grounds upon which revelation rests, but not in discussing the credibility of any subject which it discovers to have been revealed; to wait with patience 'till our faculties are enlarged, and the obstacles to our knowledge removed, and in the mean time, with the humility and simplicity of children, to receive, venerate and love the hidden and mysterious truths taught us by the invisible and incomprehensible Deity.

Hope teaches us to look forward with humble confidence to future happiness. It is an essential doctrine of revelation, that God really and truly desires the salvation of all mankind; that he created all for this end; that with this view, Jesus Christ, his eternal Son, died upon the cross, and established the Church with all necessary helps to salvation; that consequently, if we do our best endeavours, we shall be saved, not indeed by our natural strength, for with this alone we can do nothing, but by the help of grace, which God is ever ready and desirous to impart to those who employ the proper means for obtaining it; that consequently, if any one is in his petition to save himself alone, and that if any one despair or cease to hope, it must either be, that he refuses to do his best, or that he violates the doctrines of faith, and accuses God of injustice. Hope gives peace to the mind, not by imparting a certainty of future happiness, which even the apostle himself declares he did not possess, but by inspiring a firm yet humble confidence in the promises, the mercy, and the merits of Christ.

But what is Charity, that first, that greatest, that essential of all the Christian virtues? Is it synonymous with benevolence? Does it consist merely in relieving the distressed, comforting the sorrowful, clothing the naked, and similar works of brotherly kindness? No, for St. Paul says, "If I distribute my goods to the poor, and give my body to the flames, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." (1 Cor. xiii. 3.) Charity, then, is something more than benevolence. What is it? It is a virtue which regards God as well as man. It would be a partial and imperfect virtue, indeed, if it excluded God, the most perfect, the most amiable, the only adorable being, the first of benefactors, the best of friends, the most tender and loving of parents. It teaches us to love God above all things, to prefer his law and will before every consideration, to make them the rule, guide and criterion of our thoughts, our words, and our conduct. It prepares us at any moment to sacrifice whatever we value most in life, rather than violate the allegiance we owe to our sovereign Lord. It teaches us to worship him in the manner he requires, and consequently to follow the religion which we sincerely believe to have been established by Him. For should any man say to God, "I love thee, O God, but I will not worship thee in the manner which thou hast commanded, but in a manner which I consider as good or better," would he not offer an affront to God? Would he not be considered as a rebel against the Divine majesty? Would not his selfish homage be rejected with disdain?

And here, my brethren, it follows, as an immediate consequence, that human governments

ought not to interfere between God and his creatures, and compel, by pains and penalties, a form of worship which the conscience of man does not approve. Not that man is always justified who follows his conscience. That conscience may be, and often is, wilfully perverted; and, in this case, it becomes a perverse and deceitful guide. But, though man is not always justified in following his conscience, he can never be justified in acting against it; and as God alone knows the secrets of the human heart, it is not for man to force his own conviction upon others, and compel them to follow his conscience instead of their own. Surely, if liberty is ever valuable, ever sacred, ever an inalienable right, it is in the intercourse of man with God, who requires not the officious aid of tyrants to render to every one according to his works; who can well distinguish the hypocrite from the sincere adorer; who alone can determine how far ignorance may excuse error, or sincerity supply the place of truth. Hence it follows that all those civil enactments which compel the conscience in its quiet and simple intercourse with God, by whomsoever or against whomsoever directed, are equally repugnant to the law of nature and to the virtue of Christian charity.

This sacred virtue teaches us, in the next place, to love every neighbour as ourselves, in thought, in word and in deed. It forbids us to think unkindly, or to judge rashly of any human being; it commands us to put the best construction on his conduct, to excuse it when we can, and palliate it when it will not admit of excuse, and this, even though our judgments be confined to the secrets of our own breasts.

Still more does it require that our words be regulated by the same principles; that nothing escape our lips, which can injure our neighbour's reputation, or disturb his peace of mind; that when occasion offers, we undertake his defence, excuse his defects, extenuate his errors, and proclaim his merits. It teaches us to assist him in his distress, comfort him in his sorrows, advise him in his doubts, correct his errors, and as far as lies in our power, promote all his temporal and spiritual interests.

And here, my Christian brethren, I cannot refrain from offering a few remarks, upon what is usually called proselytism. This word is become odious, and all men seem eager to disclaim its import, as if it were a crime. Yet what is meant by proselytism? If it means converting others to the true religion, what were the apostles themselves but the makers of proselytes? What did Jesus Christ give them in charge to do when he bade them "*go and teach all nations*," (Matt. xxviii. 19.) but every where to make proselytes? For what were the apostles persecuted, put to death and crowned with the glory of martyrdom, but for making proselytes? What successor of the apostles would do his duty, if he did not labour, like them, to make proselytes? What Christian could lay claim to the rewards of charity, who convinced of the truth of his religion, and of the inestimable blessings it imparts, refused or neglected to make others partakers of it; concealed his treasure from the objects of distress, and covered "*under a bushel*," the light which was wanted to guide the steps of his benighted fellow-travellers?

But, if by proselytism is meant the seducing of men from truth to error, or what we believe to be such; if it imply the use of any means that are unfair, unhandsome, dishonourable, or uncharitable; of violence, bribery, false arguments, or any other means whatsoever, than such as are dictated by the strictest truth and animated by pure benevolence, then, indeed, is proselytism as odious as it is unchristian: then, far be its practice from every Catholic and from every Christian. Be it hated and detested by every lover of honesty, of truth and of charity.

Such is that virtue of charity which the apostle declares to be the first, the best, the most essential of Christian virtues. I rejoice, my Christian brethren, that it is so; for it is the one respecting which we are all happily agreed. However we may differ on other points, on this there is no difference amongst us. Would to God the agreement between us was as perfect on all points, which the apostle pronounces necessary for our future welfare; but as differences do exist, I am glad, that they regard the less, rather than the greater virtue. I am glad that the virtue which makes man most like to God, without which all other virtues can be of no avail, with which every necessary virtue may be hoped for, should be common, my Christian brethren of all religious persuasions, to you, to me, and to as all. I grant, I grant, a perfect union, but can that union be deemed unimportant which is cemented by the ties of love, even such a love as he who died for love brought from heaven, and bestowed as the greatest of blessings to men?

Charity then, is a universal virtue. It admits of no exception. It extends to God and to our fellow-creatures of every country, of every colour, of every disposition, of every opinion, of every sex. The man who should exclude from his universal charity one single child of Adam, be his country, his conduct, his religion whatever it may, transgresses this

first of the divine commands, and "*becomes guilty of all.*" (James, ii. x.) With men of blood and the workers of iniquity will be his portion.

But some of you may object that St. John, the apostle of Charity, himself admits an exception, when he tells us that if a man come to us, who brings with him certain errors of doctrine, we are not "*to receive him into our houses, nor say to him, God speed you; for he that saith unto him God speed you, communicateth with his wicked works.*"—(2 John, i. 10, 11.) I acknowledge that such are the words of the apostle, and that the passage is liable to misconstruction; and therefore, in many of the Catholic translations of the Scripture, a note is added, informing the reader, that the intention of St. John is merely to caution the faithful against the danger which may arise from a familiarity with those who have prevaricated from the true faith, and become the teachers of false doctrine; but that he does not mean to restrain the limits of fraternal charity, which requires us to wish well and pray for all, even our enemies. Indeed every one may perceive that cases may occur, in which charity requires us to discountenance the teachers of error, and the seducers of the people. Thus, if in the midst of a united and peaceful flock an innovator should start up, broaching new doctrines, seducing the people from their faith, and causing divisions, it might be a duty of charity to shew our abhorrence of his conduct, by shunning all familiarity with him, and keeping him at a distance. But should even he be in temporal or spiritual distress, the same charity, which before bad us to shun him, now commands us to fly to his aid, and forgetting his errors and his crimes, judge of him mildly, speak of him kindly, and afford him every temporal and spiritual assistance in our power. This I am taught by the Catholic Church, and this I believe to be the undoubted meaning of the apostle. Thus the lovely virtue of charity remains unrestrained by a single exception, and embraces every human being for whom the Redeemer of all shed his sacred blood.

But methinks I hear you reply, "*That some of the doctrines of Catholics are of so odious and pernicious a character, as to stamp their professors as the enemies of God and man.*"—Truly, my Christian brethren, when I consider the misrepresentations of the Catholic religion, which so universally prevail in this country, I am filled with astonishment, and had I not a precedent in the first three centuries of Christianity, I should be at a loss to account for so extraordinary a fact. During those primitive ages, the religion of Christ is admitted by all to have been in its greatest practical purity; yet we find that at no period was it ever more calumniated. There is no absurdity, which was not charged upon its doctrines; no atrocity, which was not imputed to its morality. The most degrading idolatry, the most unnatural crimes, even murder itself, were asserted to be sanctioned by the holy religion of Christ. In their public assemblies, his sainted followers were accused of offering infants in sacrifice, and feasting upon the flesh and blood of their innocent victims! Did not these marvellous calumnies against the primitive Christians stand recorded in the undoubted page of history, I should almost disbelieve my senses, when they testify to me the existence of a similar combination, prevailing so long, and so extensively against the same religion in this country. Where is the book, from the paltry penny tract to the learned and costly volume; where the pulpit, from the meeting-house to the cathedral, that has not misrepresented, as *erroneously*, as *unjustly*, and as *unaccountably*, the ancient religion of this country? ~~Christianity~~ *Christianity* the Catholic religion even distantly resembles the hideous portraits drawn of it by our adversaries; were its tenets even remotely like those which are ascribed to it, there is no one here who would hate and abhor it more than myself! I would fly from it as a pestilence. I would not continue a member of it a single day. Let us, my brethren, in a few instances, compare the portraits with the originals. I shall not now attempt to demonstrate the Catholic doctrines, but merely to state them; my present object being not to convince you that these doctrines are true, but merely that they furnish no ground for excluding Catholics from a share in the common charities of Christians. What are the leading doctrines of the Catholic Church? In the first place, the Catholic Church holds, as the foundation of all religion, that there is but one supreme, self-existent, eternal Being, infinite in power, in wisdom, in goodness, in every perfection; by whom all things were made, in whom all that exist "*live, move, and have their being.*" (Acts, xvii. 28.) It teaches that our first duty is, to love God, and adore him alone; that the worst of transgressions and the greatest of crimes is, to give his homage to any creature whatsoever. It teaches that in this one God, there are three divine persons, perfectly distinct in personality, perfectly one in nature; that the second person descended from heaven, became man, and died upon a cross for the salvation of all mankind; that through his blood all may be saved and that there is "*no other name under heaven, given to men, in which any one can*" obtain salvation:—(Acts, iv. 12.)—that all spiritual graces and blessings actually bestowed in this

life, or hoped for in the next, must be derived originally from the sufferings and merits of the divine Redeemer alone.

So far, my dissenting brethren, I trust that all or most of you agree with the Catholic Church. You are, therefore, agreed with her not only in charity, but in the profession of the primary and most essential doctrines of faith. Beyond these primary articles, you are not, I believe, very rigid in exacting agreement from each other. Other points you consider as of smaller moment, and allow on them a great latitude of opinions. Allow the same privilege to your Catholic brethren, which you allow to each other. This is just, and this, I think, I have a right to claim at your hands.

But you have been told that "*Catholics worship images, as did the pagans of old; and that, like them, they give the glory of the eternal God to the works of men's hands.*" I know how common these accusations are, and how otherwise respectable are the sources from whence they spring, or I should fear to insult your understandings by supposing that any of you are capable of believing them. For is it possible, that in an age and country, which claims to be so learned and so enlightened, men should be found capable of believing that the majority of the Christian world, the great, the good, the learned of almost every civilized nation under heaven, are so ignorant, so debased, so stupid, so wicked as to give divine honours to a lifeless and senseless image? Is it possible that any of you should persuade yourselves that the most ignorant Catholic here present should be capable of adoring, for instance, the ivory image, which you see upon that altar?

"But why, if the image is not worshipped, is it there?" Ah! my Christian brethren, look at that image, and tell me what impression does it make on your minds? It represents your Redeemer nailed to the cross, and dying for your sins. Can you behold such an object unmoved? Can you fix upon it a vacant eye? Can you gaze upon it, and not reflect how great was his goodness, who thus suffered; how criminal those sins which caused such sufferings; how sincere ought to be your sorrow in having participated in the commission of them? It is to excite such emotions that the image is placed there, and let me ask you, could a more appropriate object stand upon the Christian altar, or be placed before the eyes of a Christian assembly, when they meet to pay their worship to their divine Redeemer, when every mind should be impressed, and every heart penetrated with the remembrance of his sufferings, the source of all our happiness and all our hope?

Really, my Christian brethren, I blush to think it should be necessary to say that Catholics, as well as you, know the folly, and detest, as much as you, the impiety of giving divine honours to a lifeless piece of wood or ivory, however skilfully the sculptor may have fashioned it, or whatever object it may present to the imagination.

"But do we not worship and pray to the saints?" We worship no creature whatever, and therefore not the saints. "But at least we pray to them?" Yes, my Christian brethren, just as St. Paul prayed to his own converts, or I pray to you. I say to you, and with all sincerity I say it, "pray for me, my brethren; obtain for me from God, those blessings which I may myself be unable or unworthy to obtain." I say the same to the blessed Mother of Jesus Christ, to St. Peter, St. Paul, St. Augustin, St. Jerom, or any other of those holy persons, whose acknowledged sanctity has procured for them, through the grace and merits of Christ, the friendship of God and the happiness of heaven. Surely there is nothing wrong or unreasonable in this. The earthly trials of these holy persons are past, the veil of mortality is removed from their eyes, they behold God face to face, and enjoy without reserve, his friendship and his love. May I not reasonably hope that their prayers will be more efficacious than my own or those of my friends? Under this persuasion, I say to them, as I just now said to you, "holy Mary, holy Peter, holy Paul, pray for me."—What is there in reason or revelation to forbid me to do so? A child has been deprived by death of a parent, who, through life, offered for him the most fervent supplications. Is it likely that the anxiety of a parent for the welfare of a beloved child wholly ceases in death? Should the child think not, and under this persuasion say, "Oh! my parent, think of me, love me, pray for me still. Forget not in your happy country your exile child." Would this be impiety? Would this be robbing God of his glory, or Christ of his mediation? Would this be transferring to creatures, the honours and privileges due to God alone? Would this justify you in judging harshly, speaking contemptuously, or acting unkindly towards your Catholic brother? I shall then merely add in the words of St. Paul, in conformity with the repeated decisions of the Catholic Church, and in unison with the voice of every Catholic in the world, "*Anathema to the man who worships an image as God, or gives to it divine honours, or believes it to possess any portion of divine power or virtue, or places his trust in it, or prays to it, or believes it to be any thing more than a lifeless, senseless lump of matter.*"

Anathema to the man who worships the saints as gods, attributes to them any divine power, believes them to be any more than mere creatures, wholly dependant upon God for every blessing which they possess themselves or obtain for others; who prays to them, with any other view than that of obtaining their prayers, and as one creature may lawfully pray to another. *Anathema* to the man who gives the divine honour to any creature, whether in heaven above or in the earth beneath, or who adores as God, any but the one only true living and eternal God. And, my brethren, I will add without hesitation or fear, *Anathema* to myself, if the doctrine I have here explained to you is not the true and universally received doctrine of the Catholic Church."

You have heard "that the Catholic Priesthood usurps the divine power of forgiving sins; that for a sum of money any offender may obtain from the Priest pardon for the past, and permission for future crimes; that by this doctrine morality is relaxed, and the commission of every enormity encouraged." I blush to mention such accusations, and to suppose that any of you can have harboured, for a moment, such gross, such senseless, such incredible calumnies against the great majority of the Christian world. What is the real Catholic doctrine on this head?—Simply this.

Before his ascension into heaven, Christ breathed on his apostles, and said to them, "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."—(John, xx. 23.) He had before said to the same apostles, "*Whosoever you shall bind on earth, it shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven.*"—(Matt. xviii. 18.)—and to St. Peter he had said, that he gave to him "*the keys of the kingdom of heaven.*"—(Matt. xvi. 19.) Now from these texts we conclude, that Christ gave to his apostles and their successors in the ministry, the commission to remit, under certain conditions, the sins of his people. What are these conditions? In the first place, sincere sorrow for the offence committed, and a firm determination of mind never to commit it again. Without this condition, it is the doctrine of the Catholic Church, *universally received as an article of her faith*, that neither Priest, nor Bishop, nor Pope, nor the whole Church together, has power to forgive any sin, whatever; and that should any Priest, or Bishop, or Pope presume to grant absolution to any sinner, who was not from his heart sorry for his sins, and fully determined not to commit them again, such absolution could have no effect, but to augment the sinner's guilt, and involve in a participation of it, the rash minister who had presumed to absolve him.

And here, my brethren of various persuasions, let me ask what conditions do you require for the sinner's forgiveness? If he is truly sorry for his sins; if he is resolved to commit them no more; if he is determined to begin a new life, do you not believe that under such circumstances God forgives him his sins? So far, then, you agree with the Catholic Church in the conditions for divine forgiveness.

But these conditions, though all that most of you require, are not all that are required by the Catholic Church. She requires that the sinner confess his guilt to the minister of religion, in order that the latter may ascertain whether his penitent possesses the requisite dispositions, and that he may be enabled to prescribe the necessary reparations for the past, and precautions against future transgressions. Unless a sinner is ready to make this full and unqualified acknowledgment of his offences, however painful, however humbling it may be, the Catholic Church teaches, that her ministers have no authority to grant an absolution, and that should they presume to grant it, it would be of itself null and void.

Nor is even this all. The sinner must, moreover, submit to make such atonement to his offended God, by prayer, by fasting, by works of self-denial, and the like, as may be required of him, and if he has injured any neighbour in his good name, his property, or his person, he must, to the utmost of his ability, resolve to make full and ample satisfaction. Without such a resolution, no Catholic Priest in the world could or would consider himself authorised to give absolution to any penitent, and if he did presume to give it, his religion teaches, *as an article of faith*, that his absolution could be of no avail in the sight of God, but to add to the guilt both of the giver and the receiver.

Now, let me ask, is this a doctrine which relaxes the Christian morality, which encourages guilt, and facilitates the commission of crime? What, then, must those doctrines be, which admit the sinner to reconciliation, upon the simple condition of repentance and a confession made to God alone?

But how can man forgive sins? Who "*can forgive sins but God alone.*" I might refer you to the answer which Jesus Christ himself gave to this question, when he cured the man sick of the palsy.—(Matt. ix. 6.)

But I ask, do not most of you acknowledge that sin is forgiven in baptism, through the

agency of man? Now if the pouring of water and the invocation of the adorable Trinity, by the minister of Christ, occasion the forgiveness of sin,—(John, iii. 5)—why may not the words of absolution pronounced by the same minister, in the name and by the authority of the same adorable Trinity, equally occasion it? In other words, if God can enable his ministers to forgive sins by baptism, why not by penance and absolution? On this point, indeed, the Church of England agrees with us, as appears by the directions given in the common prayer-book for the visitation of the sick.

And who will limit the divine power, and say that whilst an earthly monarch can grant to a vicar or a general the exercise of the royal prerogative of mercy, the King of heaven cannot grant the same prerogative to the ministers and rulers of his spiritual kingdom on earth? And on the supposition that he wished to grant it, what plainer, stronger, or less equivocal words could he employ than these, "*Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven—and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.*"—(John, xx. 23.) At all events, if any of you, my dissenting brethren, think yourselves at liberty to give some figurative interpretation of your own to these plain words of Scripture, surely you will not refuse to your Catholic brethren the privilege of understanding them, with the great body of Christians in every age, in their literal and obvious sense? Why should not we be allowed to explain Scripture for ourselves as well as you?

As to the charge of forgiving sins for money, or allowing the commission of future sins on any condition whatever, it is a simple calumny. The Catholic Church expressly forbids her Clergy to receive money for absolution from sin, and would condemn as guilty of simony any Priest who committed such a crime. Accounts to the contrary, with which the sermons and tracts of this country abound, will always be found to be given without the names of persons or places, and, like other similar charges, are fabricated for purposes best known to the authors.

"But do not Catholics believe that there is a place called Purgatory, and that the Priest can liberate souls from it, upon payment of a sum of money?" Again, my Christian brethren, I ought to apologize to you for answering an objection which, though often made in the gross way I have stated it, your own good sense must convince you is an incredible misrepresentation. Can you possibly suppose that the wise, the learned, and the good of so many polished nations, should be capable of upholding a superstition so gross as is here imputed? Do you really think, that it requires essentially a Protestant intellect to discover that such a power, as is here ascribed to the Priest, is unfounded equally in religion and reason? A simple explanation of the Catholic doctrine will satisfy you on this head.

It is the belief of the Catholic church, and the same, I presume, is yours, that all sins are not equal in malice and guilt; that a passing angry feeling is not so great a crime as murder, nor an idle word as blasphemy. Hence we believe that God does not punish all sins equally, but "*renders to every one according to his works*"; (Matt. xvi. 27.) that whilst he punishes the wilful, deliberate and mortal offender with the extremity of severity, even with everlasting fire; he inflicts upon the minor and more venial sinner chastisements less severe, and of limited duration. Is this belief unreasonable? Let us consult human laws, which claim reason for their basis. The laws of England, for instance, are justly deemed a reasonable code. It is indeed generally thought that these laws are of rather too sanguinary a character; that they too often inflict the punishment of death. Still even the laws of England do not punish all offences with death. There are in them gradations of punishment, corresponding with the gradations of crime. There is banishment for life, for fourteen years, for seven years; there is imprisonment for different periods of time; there are fines of various amounts. We should call the law unjust, or the king a tyrant, who punished equally with death the child who had pitted an apple and the wretch who had murdered his father. Are the laws of God alone unjust? Has he alone the privilege of punishing without discrimination? The Scripture expressly declares, that before the divine tribunal "*Men shall give an account of every idle word.*" (Matt. xii. 36.) Let us then make a supposition. A child arrived at the full use of reason, and knowing that every lie is a sin, to escape punishment, tells an untruth in a matter of trivial moment. There is not a doubt that a sin has been committed. Before the child has time to repent, an accident deprives him of life. What reception shall he meet with at the bar of eternal justice? Will he be sentenced with the peroxide to eternal flames? I need not give the answer. Reason revolts at the idea. He must then be punished for a time, and when he has atoned for his fault, be admitted to reconciliation. Such is the belief of the Catholic church.

But if a temporary state of punishment be admitted, prayer for the dead must follow of course; as on the other hand, if heaven and hell are believed to be the only alternatives in

the moment of death, prayer for the dead is vain: for in heaven, relief is not wanted, and, "*from hell there is no redemption.*" Hence, when our friends are taken from us by death, and we have reason to hope (and when will not affection hope?) that these offences may not deserve the extremity of eternal punishment, we entreat the divine Goodness to shorten or alleviate their sufferings. Is this unreasonable? Is this superstitious? Is this unscriptural? I am sure it is not uncharitable, and charity is the first of virtues. But let us again make a supposition. An affectionate child has just been deprived by death of a beloved parent. That parent had not been without his faults: though virtuous, his virtues had not been unaccompanied by imperfections; he had sinned, but not grievously. At all events, the afflicted orphan trusts that this was the case. If in such moments, and under such impressions, he pours forth his fervent prayer, "O God, have mercy on the soul of my beloved parent, and if he be doomed to suffer, and those sufferings admit of alleviation, for the sake of Jesus Christ, hear my prayer; alleviate and shorten his pains." Is he guilty of impiety, superstition, or folly? Against what precept does he offend? What text of Scripture forbids the act? But what do I say? The act required no sanction of revelation; it was dictated by nature; the prayer came spontaneously to his lips; it appears to me it must have come so, to your own. Tell me, if it had, would you have thought yourselves bound to repress it? Would you have rebuked the voice of nature, and said, "Tempt me not, I cannot utter a prayer for my parent; he is already either in hell or in heaven; it is in vain, it is unlawful, it is criminal to pray for him." I thank God that such are not the doctrines of the Catholic church; for I should find it difficult to believe them, and still more painful to practise them.

"But the Scripture does not command us to pray for the dead." Neither does it forbid us: why, then, may not the voice of nature, the dictates of reason, and the usages of antiquity be allowed to govern our conduct? Is nothing lawful but what Scripture expressly commands or expressly prescribes? Then why bury your dead in consecrated ground? Why read passages from the Scripture, and, strangely enough, pray over their graves for every one but them? My Christian brethren, when I read the history of these religious changes, and find that prayer for the dead was not condemned in England, till the rapacious ministers of Edward the Sixth had seized upon the rich foundations, which our pious forefathers had established, to obtain the prayers of the living, I cannot persuade myself that reason or Scripture had any thing to do with forbidding such prayers: I feel convinced that if reason and Scripture had alone been consulted, you would have felt as little scruple as I do in praying for the souls of our departed friends. At all events, if the Catholic do not think the practice repugnant to Scripture, as he certainly does not, why should you condemn him? Has not he as much right as you to judge of the meaning of Scripture? And if his interpretation be fortified by the constant belief of the Catholic church, by the practice of all his ancestors, by the dictates of nature, and the best feelings of the human heart, is he not abundantly justified in preferring his own firm persuasion to your opinion?

With respect to the assertion so often made by the enemies of the Catholic religion, "*That, for a sum of money, its ministers claim the power of releasing souls from Purgatory.*" I need not, I am sure, add, that it is another of those strange misrepresentations which, though a thousand times proved to be groundless, is as often repeated. The Catholic Priest claims no authority or jurisdiction over the dead. All he can do is to apply to the mercy of God in their behalf; but, like other men, he must ever remain uncertain respecting the efficacy of his prayers. He has, indeed, one advantage peculiar to the Priesthood. He can offer sacrifice; and sacrifice under the new law, as well as under the old, has always been considered the most powerful means of moving God to mercy. Hence, if any one, in addition to his own private prayers, wish to have sacrifice offered for the souls of his departed friends, there is no doubt he must apply to the ministry of the Priests; and if "*They who serve the altar are entitled to live by the altar,*" (1 Cor. ix. 13,) no one, I presume, will deny that the Priest is entitled to a remuneration for the expense he incurs and the labour he performs in complying with the pious wishes of others. Every day he is obliged to pray, without remuneration, for the souls of the departed in general, and on certain days he is obliged to offer, for all, the holy sacrifice, equally, without remuneration; and there is no Priest charged with the care of souls, who fails to comply with this duty of charity. But if not content with these general prayers and sacrifices, individuals wish for their friends special and peculiar services, surely, he who performs them may, without reproach, receive a remuneration. Do not those who make the above-mentioned charges against the Catholic church, themselves receive fees for the burial service which they perform for the dead; nay even for the administration of baptism and for preaching the Gospel? Would

a Catholic be justified in saying, on this account, that, for a sum of money, these clergymen claim a power of remitting sin, and opening to their followers the gates of life?

I fear to exhaust your patience with these explanations, but as you are about to assist at the holy sacrifice of the new law, and as there is no subject more misrepresented than this, I must add upon it a few words. The mass, (to use a phrase of the Church of England), is the communion service of the Catholic church. In it, the bread and wine are solemnly consecrated, and when so consecrated, solemnly offered to God in the way of oblation or sacrifice, and for the various ends for which, from the beginning of the world, sacrifice has been offered. But what are the consecrated bread and wine? How often, my Protestant brethren, have not you been told that the doctrine of the Catholic church, on this head, is the height of absurdity, folly and impiety? How often have you been told that Catholics, like the Jews of Caphernaum, understand the words of Christ in a gross and carnal sense: that they believe his sacred body to be present in the sacrament, in a *crude, natural and mortal state*? Now, were such really the doctrine of the Catholic church, there would be some ground for the outcries of her adversaries; for surely our senses testify clearly enough that, *in such a state*, the body of Christ is not present. What, then, is the real doctrine of the Catholic church? She teaches, that by the words of consecration, a real change is wrought in the bread and wine, not, indeed, in external properties, but in internal substance: that now the body and blood of Christ are, *in substance, truly and really present*, though not perceptible to our senses. This is her doctrine. With respect to the *manner or state*, in which Christ is present, she has not decided any thing, except that, (as our senses testify) he is not present in the gross, natural state of a mortal body, but in some supernatural and ineffable manner suited to the object of his presence, (See Conc. Trident. Sess. xxii. cap. 1 and 2.)

Now, my brethren, what is the absurdity or impiety of this doctrine? It is absurd to believe that a body may be *truly, really and substantially* present, though not in its *usual natural state*? or that the same body may be present in different states? I grant that in mere mortal bodies these things are not naturally possible; but the question is here not of a mere mortal, but of a glorified body, and not of the glorified body of a mere man, but of a man God. May not such a Being be present in more states than one? "*Consult the Scriptures,*" and you will find that he has been present in several. Behold him now present as an infant in the stable, now as a malefactor on the cross; now, risen from the dead, he assumes the united properties of a spirit and a body. He enters the room when the doors are shut, and is found solid and tangible to the hands of Thomas; to Magdalene he appears as a gardener, to two of his disciples as a stranger; now he eats with them as a mortal body, now he vanishes, and becomes invisible as a pure spirit. (Luke, xxiv. 31.) For every varying purpose he assumes a varied form, and is present, as occasion requires, in a different state. Did he exhaust his powers? Are there no other states than these, in which he can be present? If it be his pleasure to perpetuate, in an unbloody manner, the sacrifice of the cross, and become our daily victim, and our daily spiritual food, can he not accomplish his pleasure? Will any one dare thus to circumscribe Omnipotence, and say, "So far thou canst go, but no farther? Thou canst not be present, all glorified and immortal as thou art, but I must behold thee; thou canst not communicate thyself to me, but I must taste thee." He must be an ignorant, as well as a presumptuous man who argues thus.

The question, then, is not whether Jesus Christ *can*, but whether he *has* performed for us these prodigies. The Catholic Church believes that he has, and, as far as I can judge, for the most powerful reasons. "*This is my body, this is my blood,*" (Matt. xxvi. 26; Mark, xiv. 22; Luke, xxii. 19) are the unqualified assertions of three evangelists: the fourth asserts, "*Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you shall have no life in you; for my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.*" (John, vi. 54.) St. Paul repeats the declaration of the three evangelists, "*This is my body, this is my blood,*" (1 Cor. xi. 24.) and concludes from it, that "*He who eateth, and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord.*" (Ibid. 29.) The belief of the Catholic Church, spread throughout the world, is unanimous on this head, and has ever been so from the earliest ages. The same is the belief of the various divisions of the Greek Church, separated as she has been from the Catholic Church, for a thousand years; the same is the belief of the remnants of some smaller Oriental sects, which left the communion of the Catholic Church at a still earlier period. If the belief is an error, at what period, by whom, and in what manner, was it introduced? Was the faith of the whole church corrupted *before* the schisms of Eutyches and Nestorius? How short, then, was the reign of truth? How early did the Redeemer and

the promised spirit of truth forsake the Church! Was the alteration made *after* the establishment of the Eutychian and Nestorian heresies? Then how came they to adopt a change in union with the Church they had forsaken? What general infaturation seized mankind, that all should unite, the orthodox and the heterodox, the Catholics and the sectaries, in abjuring the same truth and adopting the *same* error. And ah! my brethren, how mysterious, indeed, must the providence of God have been, to suffer the original truth to be banished from the world for a thousand years, and then discover it at last in the sixteenth century to a few Englishmen and Germans! But I am unintentionally entering into controversy, where explanation is my object. I trust, I have said sufficient on this subject to convince you that the Catholic faith has been grievously misrepresented to you; that if, like the doctrine of the Trinity and the Incarnation, it is mysterious and incomprehensible, it is not on that account to be rejected, much less blasphemed: that whether you believe it or not, you ought to respect it as the sincere and conscientious belief of the great majority of the Christian world; that neither your belief nor mine alters the mystery which Christ has established, at which you are about to assist, and to which as the institution of Christ I request your respectful attendance.

But why is it performed in an unknown tongue? and why all this parade of richly-attired priests and attendants at the altar? The former you have been told, is to keep the people in ignorance, the latter to impose upon the senses. How severe, my brethren, is your treatment of your mother Church! The reasons why, in the celebration of the mass, the Latin language is used, are simply these: First, the Latin and Greek were the languages most generally used, and almost the only written languages in the principal countries where the Christian religion was first promulgated. In these languages, therefore, the liturgy of the Church was originally composed, nearly in its present form. When several centuries afterwards, the languages of modern Europe began to be formed, the Church did not think proper to alter the languages she has ever used in celebration of the holy sacrifice. For if, on the one hand, these languages, by becoming dead, ceased to be understood by the unlearned, on the other, they became, like a body raised from death, immortal and unchangeable; and on this account the better adapted for preserving unaltered the awful doctrines and mysteries committed to their care. Would *prudence* have justified the setting aside the pure, the dignified, the immutable languages of the primitive Church, languages which, though no longer spoken by the unlettered, were still, as they are to this day, the universal languages of the learned in every country, and the adoption in their stead of the numberless barbarous, half-formed and daily changing languages of modern Europe? Would it have been respectful, would it have been secure, would it have been practicable to commit to these rude and uncertain vehicles the sacred deposit of the faith and hope of Christians? For the use of the people, translations have been made, and abound in every Catholic country: but at the altar the priest continues to commune with God in the original languages, reciting the more sacred parts of the sacrificial rite in a low voice, which breaks not the awful silence, nor disturbs the deep recollection of the surrounding adorers.

Had the Catholic Church wished to keep the people in ignorance, she would have commanded the clergy to give instructions and to preach in unknown languages: I should not now have been explaining to you in the plainest English I can command, the doctrines of the Catholic religion; but I should have been exciting your just ridicule by the delivering of a Latin oration.

With respect to ceremonies and vestments, they should be viewed with the eye of antiquity. They are the venerable relics of primitive times, and, though ill adapted to the youthful religions of modern times, well become that hoary religion, which bears the weight of so many ages. The ceremonies employed in the Christian sacrifice, as well as the sacerdotal vestments, have their model in the book of Leviticus, and, as nearly as the difference of the old and new laws permits, closely resemble those instituted by God himself. The Catholic Church deems them useful. They give a peculiar dignity to the sacred mysteries of religion; they raise the mind of the beholder to heavenly things by their various and appropriate import; they instruct the ignorant and keep alive attention; they give the ministers of religion a respect for themselves, and for the awful rites in which they officiate; but neither the ceremonies nor the vestments belong to the essence of religion. The Church established them in the first ages. She could, if she deemed it advisable, set them aside any day, and the sacrifice would be equally holy, though not equally impressive, if offered by the priest in a plain surplice, or the ordinary costume of the day.

I shall detain you no longer on the explanation of the doctrines and practices of the Ca-

tholic Church: I trust I have satisfied you that they are not what they have been actually represented to you, and that they are at least deserving of your respect. Still many of you will say, "Why adhere to them with such pertinacity in a country, where the great majority of the nation has abjured them, and where they are obnoxious to the people, and punishable by the laws?" I grant that if man were as justifiable before God, as he is before men, in choosing his religion, as he does his house or his coat, the objection would be unanswerable; for to adhere to the Catholic religion in England, the laws of God permitting us to forsake it, would be folly indeed. But it is the firm conviction of all Catholics, that however numerous may be the religions which men institute or adopt, and however little right one man may have to interfere with another in the choice of his faith, there is only one religion instituted by Christ, only one system of doctrines taught by the eternal truth; only one sheepfold appointed by the one shepherd; only one society inheriting the powers and promises which the Redeemer of the world received from his Father, and left to his apostles and their successors. Hence, without presuming to decide upon the future acceptance of those, who have lived in ignorance of the truth, and who, labouring with sincerity and earnestness to find it, have failed in their endeavours, the Catholic firmly believes that for himself, who has been blessed with a knowledge of the truth, who is conscientiously convinced that his religion is the one religion established by Christ, there is no choice left. To himself he believes that the words of Christ are strictly applicable, "*He that shall deny me before men, I will also deny him before my Father who is in heaven.*" (Matt. x. 32.) and those of St. Paul, "*It is impossible for those, who were once enlightened, have tasted also the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, have moreover tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, and are fallen away, to be renewed again unto penance, crucifying to themselves the Son of God, and making a mockery of him.*" (Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6.)

To state all the reasons which Catholics have for this conviction, would far exceed the limits of a discourse; to state a few of the principal ones will require little time.

When the divine Author of the Christian religion had given all necessary instructions to his apostles, and communicated to them the Holy Spirit, to assist and direct them, he assembled them together on Mount Olivet, and thus addressed them: "*All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations: baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.*" (Matt. xvi. 18, 19, 20.) In another of the Gospels, the same commission is given in somewhat different terms: "*Go ye into the whole world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved: but he that believeth not, shall be condemned.*" (Mark, xvi. 15, 16.) In your version, my Protestant brethren, the words are "*he who believeth not shall be damned.*"

On another occasion, Christ had said to Peter, "*Thou art Peter,*" (which name signified a rock) "*and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it: and I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, &c.*" (Matt. xvi. 18, 19.) The conclusions we draw from these texts are—

1st. That as Christ commissioned his apostles to teach all the doctrines of his religion to mankind, so he required mankind to receive these doctrines, and this under the severest penalty; "*Go ye,*" my apostles, go ye, and teach mankind "*to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*" "*He that believeth not shall be condemned.*" Therefore we are not at liberty to believe what we please, but our salvation is attached to the belief of the very doctrines taught by the apostles.

And here, my Protestant brethren, I am led to the consideration of a point, which forms the great fundamental difference between the Catholic Church and you. You maintain that all the doctrines, which a Christian is required to believe, are contained in the Bible, and that each individual has a right to explain the meaning of the Bible for himself, and believe accordingly.

The Catholic Church, on the other hand, maintains that there are doctrines of essential importance not contained in the Bible; as for example, the lawfulness and obligation of keeping holy the Sunday instead of the Saturday the real scriptural sabbath; and moreover, that even if all the doctrines of religion were actually contained in the Bible, still that the rule of our belief would not be the Scriptures explained by private interpretation, but the teaching of the apostles and their successors.

With respect to the apostles themselves, you will readily admit that there was an obligation of believing their doctrines. Would any of you have ventured to contradict St. Paul

to his face, to tell him that you did not understand the Bible in the sense he taught, and that you had a right to explain its meaning for yourselves! would he have acquiesced in your claims? would he not rather have pronounced upon you the *anathema* which he declared he would pronounce even upon an angel from heaven, who should teach doctrines different from those which he had preached? (Gallatians, i. 8.) Would he not have said to you, as he said to the Corinthians, "*Keep my ordinances as I have delivered them to you: but if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor the Church of God.*" (1 Cor. xi. 2—16.)

But why, let me ask, should the apostles be entitled to an obedience which is refused to their successors? The apostles had no power but such as they received from Christ; no security against error, but such as they derived from his guidance and protection. Now the same powers the same guidance and protection, were promised to the successors of the apostles as were promised to the apostles themselves. Christ did not send to the apostles the "*Spirit of truth*," to "*teach them all truth*" (John, xvi. 13) only for a limited time, but "*for ever*." (John, xiv. 16.) He did not promise to be himself with his apostles merely during their short lives, but "*all days, even to the consummation of the world.*" (Matt. xxviii. 20.) The Catholic Church, therefore, believes that the same submission is due to the lawful successors of the apostles in the first, the second and the nineteenth century of Christianity, as was due to the apostles themselves. Where does Scripture teach that the doctrines of the apostles should be received, and those of their successors rejected? Where does it teach that, after the death of the apostles, the commission to teach mankind should be transferred from the living pastors of the Church, to the dead letter of the Bible? Where does it recall the solemn denunciation pronounced against those who refuse to "*hear the Church*?"—(Matt. xviii. 17.) Where does it retract the promised guidance of the Spirit and the pledged protection of Christ? In what age of Christianity did the great body of believers adopt the modern principle of private interpretation? Most of the apostles were dead before the whole of the New Testament was written, near four hundred years had elapsed before its different books were collected together and fully authenticated; the Gospel had been preached, and Christianity planted in many nations, before a single copy of the New Testament had reached them; more than fourteen centuries had passed over the Christian Church, before the invention of printing rendered it possible for one Christian in a thousand to possess a copy of the Scriptures, or one in ten thousand of the people to read it. Could Christ intend that men should follow a rule of faith, to which they could not obtain access? to read a book which was not written, or could not be obtained? to explain a book which, if they possessed, they could not read? Could he require that the ignorant and unlettered should understand a book, which the wisest and most learned cannot always comprehend? Could he require as a condition of salvation, that the peasant, the day-labourer, the woman, the child, unacquainted with the languages, the history, the usages of antiquity, should fathom the depths of the most ancient, the most profound and the most mysterious volume that ever was penned; a volume, in which the great St. Augustine declared he found more which he could not, than which he could comprehend; the contents of which he could never have brought himself to believe, "if the authority of the Catholic Church had not moved him to it?"—(Contra. ep. Fundam.) Whilst a human legislator would deem it the height of folly to write his laws, and leave them without authorized living expositors, can we suppose that the Divine Legislator would be guilty of such an inconsistency? Whilst the generality of men are acknowledged to require the aid of living teachers in every science, in every art, in almost every mechanical trade, can we believe that the wisdom and goodness of God would leave them without this assistance in religion, the most difficult and the most important of all sciences? Could Christ require, under pain of damnation, that all men should believe the same doctrine, and yet require them to find these doctrines in a book, which is capable, as fatal experience too clearly proves, of being understood in a thousand different senses, and which perhaps no two unassisted men ever understood in the same? Tertullian, a learned writer of the second century, tells us, "That whenever any refractory Christian, in those days, refused to submit to the doctrines of the Catholic church, he claimed a right to explain Scripture for himself, and to make it teach whatever doctrines he chose to adopt."—(Lib. de præscriptionibus.) The same has been the refuge of all subsequent innovators. There is no error, extravagance, or impiety, which private interpretation has not maintained to be the infallible word of God. Hence the Catholic church continues to adhere to the ancient rule, which guided the faithful in the days of the apostles, and which has preserved unity of faith amongst their successors through every age.

But should you, my dissentient brethren, deem these reasons insufficient to justify our submission to the decisions of the church, and insist that every principle of religion shall rest on the private interpretation of Scripture, we have no objection, in the present instance, to comply with your demand. What does the Scripture say on this head? "*If he will not hear the church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican.*"—(Matt. xviii. 17.) "*Into whatever city you (my apostles) enter, and they receive you not... I say to you, it shall be more tolerable at the day of judgment for Sodom, than for that city... He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me.*"—(Luke, x. 10, 12, 16.) "*He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be condemned.*"—(Mark, xvi. 16.) "*Remember your prelates who have spoken to you the word of God: whose faith follow... Obey your prelates, and be subject to them, for they watch, being to render an account of your souls.*"—(Hebrews, xiii. 7, 17.)

These and many other similar texts are sincerely understood by every Catholic to require submission to the church in matters of faith and morality, and consequently, to forbid all opposite interpretation of Scripture. And will you refuse the Catholic an equal right with yourselves to judge of the sense of Scripture? If he understand the Scripture to teach submission to the church, why should you object to his following the convictions of his conscience? You claim a right to explain Scripture differently from him: why should you refuse him the privilege of explaining it differently from you? He calls not for your approval of his opinions; he objects not (on his own account) to your dissent. He is willing to abide the decision of the all-seeing Judge, and to incur the threatened condemnation, if his faith be erroneous. By the same tribunal will your faith be tried. Be satisfied with this, and do not expect that your Catholic brethren should prefer your opinions to their own convictions. Allow to others the liberty you claim for yourselves. "*As you would that men should do to you, do you also to them in like manner.*"—(Luke, vi. 31.)

But I fancy I hear some of you ask, why, upon the supposition that the lawful successors of the apostle are authorized teachers of religion and expositors of Scripture, does the Catholic assume that the pastors of his church are the lawful successors of the apostles, and the Catholic church the only church of Christ? The reasons will be best given by recurring to the different texts of Scripture already cited. From those texts I have before inferred, first, that certain revealed doctrines are essentially required to be believed. "*He who believeth not shall be condemned.*"—(Mark, xvi. 16.)

I infer, in the second place, from the commission of Christ, "*Go, teach ALL NATIONS,*"—(Matt. xxviii.)—"*Go PREACH the Gospel to EVERY CREATURE.*"—(Mark, xvi.)—that the religion of Christ must be a universal, not a national or merely local religion. Now the Catholic is the only universal religion. It is morally universal as to place; for it exists in every known country of the world. In many countries, it is the only religion; in most, its numbers greatly predominate; in every country, where Christianity exists in any form, there the Catholic religion is found. It is comparatively universal as to numbers, being infinitely more numerous than any other sect or denomination of Christians, and perhaps than all other sects and denominations put together. All other religions or sects are confined to comparatively narrow limits. They are national or local establishments. They are the church of England, the church of Scotland, the church of Geneva, the Greek, or the Russian church, existing in the particular countries which give them their names, and scarcely known in other parts of the world. Not one of them has the slightest pretensions to be the church of "*all nations.*" Hence we conclude that none of them can be the church which Christ commanded his apostles to found for the benefit of the world at large, into which the prophet had predicted "*all nations should flow.*"—(Isaiah, ii. 2.)

3rdly. The doctrines which the apostles were commanded to teach, were those and only those which they had learnt from Christ: "*teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*"—(Matt. xxviii.) Therefore the doctrines of the true and universal church of Christ must be in all places the same; for where there is difference of doctrine, there must necessarily be deviation from the doctrines of Christ. Now this unity of doctrine exists in the great Catholic church, and in it alone. Though spread through every nation of the known world, though professed by so many "*peoples, and tribes, and tongues,*" differing from each other in manners, in customs, in language, in interests, the doctrines of the Catholic religion are every where the same. Not a difference will be found on any single article of faith, amongst all its countless millions. Make the experiment. Consult the first English Bishop or Priest you meet: ask the respectable pastor of this congregation what is the doctrine of the Catholic church on any given article of faith, and carefully note his reply. Put the same question to the Bishop or Priest of France, of Italy, of Germany,

of Spain, of America, of Hindostan, of China; and I am sure you will receive from all and every one the same answer. One and all will unhesitatingly tell you, "Such is the doctrine of the Catholic church, such is my sincere belief." This, you will acknowledge, my brethren, is as it ought to be. Unity like this is indispensable in any church which claims to teach the uniform and unchangeable doctrines of Christ.

Need I add that you will in vain seek for it in any other sect or communion? Look back at the history of the different sects now in England. It is but three hundred years since the most ancient of them arose, and it was the first that England had ever known. For near a thousand years the Catholic religion had prevailed in England; and no schism had divided its followers. Every inhabitant of the island believed the same doctrines, obeyed the same pastors, adored at the same altars. What is the case now? Alas! imagination sickens at the view. Who now can number our religious divisions? Who can enumerate our discordant sects? In vain has the arm of flesh been employed to coerce the licentious spread of schism; in vain have penalties, privations, and persecutions been inflicted upon Dissenters from the national creed. In spite of every effort, divisions still continue to multiply, and the eternal Truth is asserted to have taught as many different systems of faith, as there are different expounders of the Bible.

Such has ever been the case in former ages. Hundreds of sects now no more, have at different periods arrayed themselves against the Catholic church. From the moment of their separation, unity fled from them; they became a house divided against itself, and they fell. This the Catholic well knew, and therefore when the modern churches arose, proclaimed their divine origin, and solicited his confidence, he declined to give it to them, and remained attached to the original church. Was he not justified in so doing? Did not common prudence require that he should say, "Gentlemen, allow me to delay my assent at least for a while, and see whether you will be able to settle amongst yourselves that unity of faith, which all your predecessors in reformation have failed to establish. Permit me to retain my ancient belief, till you have agreed amongst yourselves what other I shall substitute in its room." Alas! he must still wait; for there is yet no prospect of such agreement.

My Protestant brethren, you were never placed in our situation. Your ancestors forsook; they were compelled, by penal laws, to forsake the Catholic religion, and you have been born in a state of separation. Had not this been the case, and still more; could you have foreseen the lamentable disunion to which England has been brought, you would have reasoned as we reason, and acted as we act. Be candid then, and if you chuse not to return to the ancient church, let Catholics be excused from adopting a new church. If you claim the right of adopting a new religion because you imagine it to be true, surely a Catholic may be excused for adhering to the old one upon a similar conviction.

4thly. When Christ bade his apostles "go teach all nations," he promised to assist them in the work; "And lo!" he said, "I am with you;" and as this great work was not to be finally accomplished till the end of time, — (Matt. xxix. 14.) he promised to continue the same assistance "even to the consummation of the world." — (Matt. xxviii. 20.) This assistance of Christ was indispensable, the conversion of nations being a supernatural work, which the unassisted powers of man could never accomplish. Hence Catholics conclude that the Church which has converted "all the nations" that have been converted, and which still enjoys the exclusive privilege of converting nations, must be the Church of Christ. Now it is a certain fact, that every nation which has at any time become Christian, was originally converted by the Catholic Church. There is no country of any considerable extent, where a different religion now prevails, which was not previously a Catholic country. But does the Catholic Church still possess the power of converting nations? Take a map of the globe, and see what she has done since the Reformation. Before that period, the Church of Christ comprised but three quarters of the globe. Since that time a fourth has been added to it. America was discovered at the moment when England and some of the northern countries of Europe were preparing to abandon the ancient faith; and America has since embraced with joy the faith which they forsook. The whole of South America is now Catholic, and, with the exception of some European settlers, nearly the whole of North America. Many vast countries and islands of the east, to which the faith of Christ had not before been carried are now added to the Catholic fold. Scarcely were the first three centuries of Christianity so successful in the conversion of pagan nations as the last three have been. Is it then possible that Christ can have forsaken his Catholic Church? or can he trust with his richest graces, and employ in his greatest works, a Church which has forsaken him? Catholics are persecuted not.

But have not the English sects made many converts of late years? My brethren, we

have heard much of foreign missions. We have seen enormous sums of money collected, and numerous missionaries sent out by several different sects. I have read their reports; I have looked in vain for their success. I do not assert that *nothing* has been done. But I say that the money which has been expended, ought, without any supernatural aid, to have done much more than I have found done. A few individuals may be brought to an exterior conformity with any form of worship; and a school, a village, a town, or a small island may be fashioned to any religion. This is all natural. But whole nations and continents cannot be thus converted. The wealth of kingdoms would not supply sufficient means, nor the duration of the world sufficient time for the conversion of its pagan inhabitants. To bring the nations "to the obedience of faith," to make them inwardly and sincerely Christians, in the work only of divine grace, and the accomplishment of it the privilege of the Church of Christ alone. Let any other sect which claims to have converted nations, point on the map of the globe where those nations lie, and the inefficacy of their labours will at once appear. I know that we are constantly told, "that prospects are brightening that the harvest is ready for the sickle, and that great conversions are on the point of being made." Let them first be made, and then we will believe; let them rival, or even distantly resemble the conversions of the Catholic Church, and then we will deliberate about a change of religion. But till then, we will remain with the Church with which the promises of Christ remain. Is this unreasonableness?

5thly. It appears, by the declaration of Christ to Peter, "*thou art Peter, (that is, a rock) and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*" (Matt. xvi.) First, that the Church of Christ should always be built on Peter; Secondly, that it should never be overthrown.

What our Saviour meant by saying that his Church should be built on Peter seems clearly explained by the words immediately following, "*I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, &c.*" (Matt. xvi.) The delivery of keys has always implied the conferring of superiority on chief command, and the "*kingdom of heaven*," in this and many other passages, seems primarily to designate the Church on earth. Christ, therefore, promised to constitute Peter the permanent head of his Church. Now the Catholic Church has ever been united in faith, and has ever acknowledged a superiority of spiritual power in the successors of St. Peter; whilst all other sects have invariably broken this connexion, and have consequently ceased to answer the scriptural description of the Church of Christ.

Again, the Catholic Church has ever preserved the stability of character designated by the "*rock against which the powers of hell were never to prevail.*" There is no human institution which, in this respect, resembles it. States and empires have risen and fallen, and every thing on earth, that is the work of man, has yielded in its turn, to change, destruction, or decay, during the eighteen centuries which form the era of the Christian Church. Numberless sects of Christians have, during this period, arisen, and, like other human institutions, have long since ceased to be. No sectist did they quit the rock of Peter, than they became the sport of every wind and wave. They altered, they divided, they separated, and they disappeared. Only the original Church continues undivided, undivided and unchanged. The nineteenth century beholds her as strong, as vigorous, as united, and more universal than the ninth. Who would not hesitate to forsake such a Church?

Were you, my Protestant brethren, to behold upon a stormy sea a fleet of many sail, huddled in some distant shore, whither you were obliged to go; if all these vessels, save one, were of smaller dimensions; if you beheld all, save one, labouring with the winds and waves, and necessarily dashed upon some rock or shoal, and wrecked, whilst others threatened to succumb to them; and to share by turns the same hopeless fate; if the one vessel I have mentioned were of infinitely greater magnitude; if it pursued its steady course, unaffected by the winds that blow, and the waves that broke against it; if it had been long known to convey to the wished-for shore myriads of happy passengers; if on some one of these vessels a heaven-directed pilot was known to sail, whom could you hope to find him? And if you must embark on one or other of these vessels, which would you select? And there would be no difference of choice amongst you. You would all embark on the same goodly ship; and should you behold any passenger of that ship quitting it to risk his life on one of its frail attendants, you would all equally conclude that he had lost his senses.

Put yourselves, my Protestant brethren, in the situation of the Catholic. Imagine yourselves to have been born and educated in the Catholic religion, the religion of your ancestors for ages, the religion with which, from the dawn of reason, had been associated your most pleasing recollections, and on which reposed all your future hopes: should the advo-

cate of some new creed invite you to forsake your ancient faith and adopt his novel doctrines, telling you that he had authority from God to alter the faith of the universal church, and to restore it to what he calls its primitive state, would you listen to him? Would you not say, "Did not Christ promise *for ever to remain with his Church*, and does not history testify that he has kept his promise? Where are now the numberless sects which assailed her in former ages, as you do now? and what security can you give that you will be more fortunate than they? Is not the head of my Church the undoubted successor of St. Peter, on whom Christ promised "*to build his Church against which the gates of hell should never prevail*"?—(Matt. xvi.) Is not my Church the same universal Church originally founded by the apostles, and is there any other Church of all nations, but mine? Have not all Christians been converted by it? Has any nation ever *willingly* forsaken it? Has it not been the fruitful parent of numberless virtuous men in every country and in every age, and particularly of all those eminently holy men, who are denominated saints? Wide as is its extent, is not its faith, its worship, its government, every where the same? Does it not bind together the jarring nations of the earth in peace, and make all its children brethren? Where is your apostolical descent? where your commission to reform the Church, *with which Christ promised for ever to remain*? where are the nations which you have converted, where the unity of religion; where the steadiness of faith; where the bonds of peace; where the rock of Peter; where the "*one sheepfold and the one shepherd*"?—(John, x. 16.) Is there one of you, my brethren, who would not reason thus? Is there one who would, under such circumstances, change his religion? And should the members of the new creeds abuse, or the government of the country punish you for your refusal, would you not deem it a grievous oppression, and ask to what distant region Christian charity was fled? "*As you would that men should do to you, do you also to them in like manner.*"—(Luke, vi. 31.)

I trust I have said sufficient to attain, with most of you, the object I had in view, namely, the conciliating of your charity and good will towards your Catholic brethren. I have not attempted to *demonstrate* the doctrines we profess, but to *explain* them fairly, and to convince you that they are constantly misrepresented even by our most respectable adversaries. This will shew you the necessity, on all occasions, of learning the real doctrines of Catholics from themselves. I have glanced at a few of the reasons which, in the midst of so great a national defection, keep the Catholic true, under every obloquy, privation, and persecution, to the faith of his fathers. I have no expectation that the arguments I have touched upon, will induce you to become Catholics, but I do trust they will convince you that reasonable and good men may belong to the Catholic Church, and that Catholics are as honestly and as sincerely convinced of the truth of their doctrines as you can be of yours. The inference is clear. Catholics, like others, are entitled to your charity; that is, to your kind feelings, your best wishes, your friendly remarks, your benevolent and brotherly treatment. If you deem their faith erroneous, pray for them, and by every *fair argument and kind persuasion*, endeavour to withdraw them from their supposed errors. To this we have not, we cannot have the smallest objection. But do not misrepresent our doctrines; do not "*speak all manner of evil untruly against us*;" do not call upon temporal governments to persecute and oppress us. This is all we demand.

And you, my Catholic brethren, act in like manner towards your brethren of every religious persuasion. Love them all as your fellow-creatures, created by God to be the objects of your kindness and affection in this life; and your eternal companions in the next. Wish them well, pray for them, instruct them, speak kindly of them, and to the best of your power, administer to all their spiritual and temporal wants. This, you have been taught from your infancy; is your bounden duty; the duty of *charity*, without which, your *faith* can avail you nothing.

How beautiful, my brethren of every religious persuasion, would Christianity still appear notwithstanding the unhappy divisions which prevail amongst us in *faith*, if we were all united in the *practice*, as we are in the *profession*, of true Christian charity. May God in his goodness bring about this happy union! Nothing can so effectually contribute to bringing us to an entire agreement here, and to a common fellowship of bliss hereafter; *blessings, I sincerely wish you all, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*

Amen.

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FINIS.

Printed by W. E. Andrews, 3, Chapterhouse-court, St. Paul's, London.